

North of Nothing

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A thesis

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University of Washington

Abstract

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Chair of the supervisory committee:

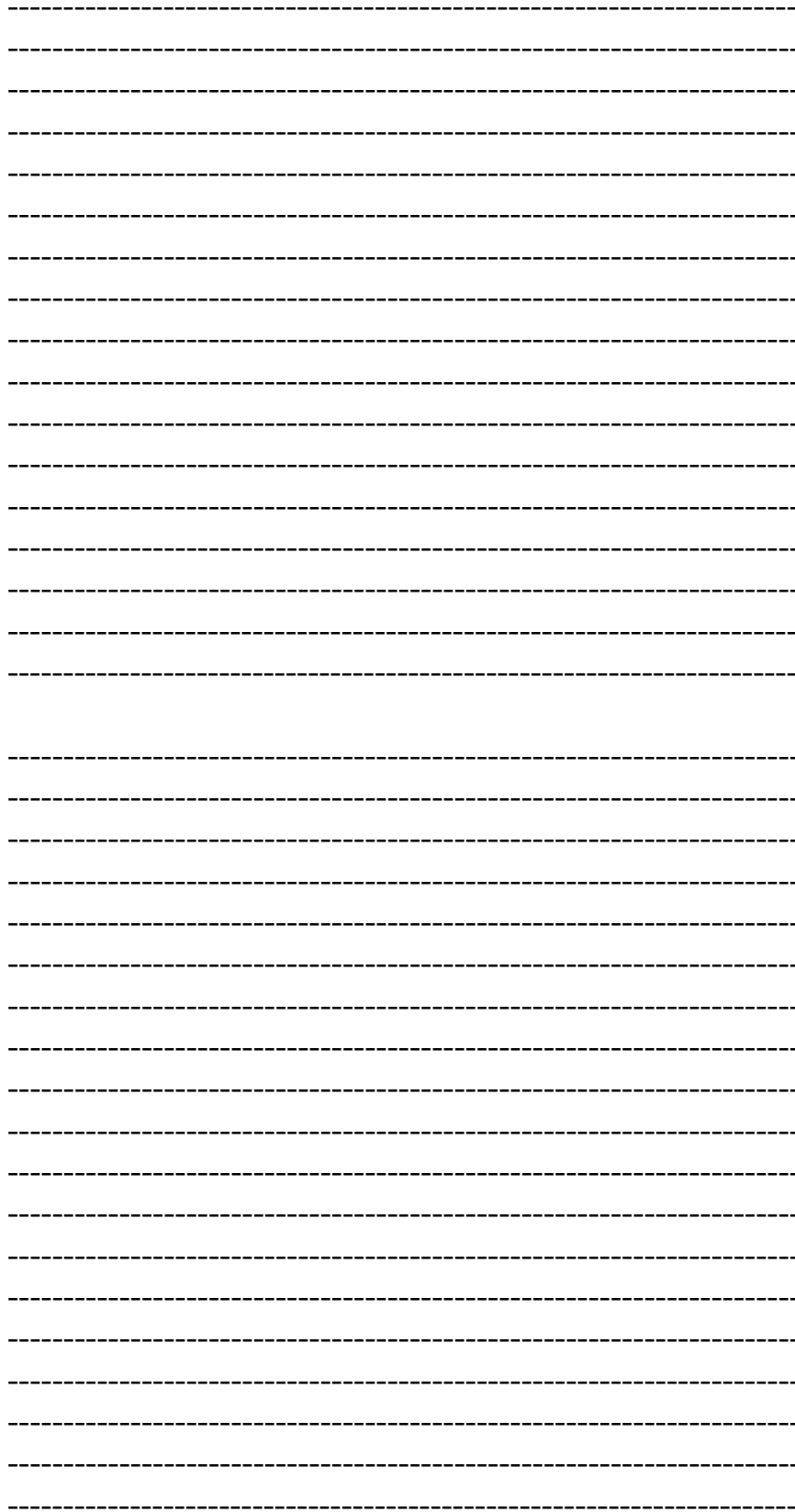
Associate Director Amaranth Borsuk

School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences

North of Nothing was sown in a psychiatry hospital unit as scribbles/seeds in a notebook, germinated into cotton, spun into fibers, woven into poetry, and finally sewn into a quilt. It is an exploration of and a meditation on a depressed mind. Starscapes and cellscapes stretch up through silt and grey matter revealing repressed traumas that, once met at the surface, can be transformed from hopelessness to stillness. It is the reluctant admittance of pain — the end of a suffering. The *I* within is at once me and not me, a composite of multiple selves in one life, selves of past lives, selves formed from calling on the mad and mystic women before me, inviting their possession in. It is text and textile existing on thresholds —past/present, host/ghost, science/magic, Hypnos/Thanatos, comforter/shroud . . .

North of Nothing

Aya BonnLuders



twist & grow
needle & thread

open & sow
the living the -- dead

ride an elevator North
hazy bloodless alone

ride the elevator North

North of down
North of apathy
 of anguish
North of screams
 of long Nights
North of ghosts
 of memories
 of ice
North of nothing

the cold rises --
warmth weights itself
seeps through sediment
of distance and stardust

an atomic imprint left behind
by an oily finger

a cosmic artifact
felt/unseen

& a chill gallops inward
ice chips/my teeth

the Night is a comfort
to gauzy structures

the Night is a weight
to gauzy structures

impressions

auras

the new moon

the sun in winter

all dead stars

that shatter the light particles

of their own wakes --

spinning their own shrouds

celestial ghosts

& I have ghosts
of dead pets
& childhood
psychic imprints
of Nights
not worth whispers
of a dead self
a life ended
by the cruelty of moving past
like years
of cosmic light
wedged in a window
pressed in a door
pressed in a catastrophe
my murdering is
my murderer is
my murdered me

 & I have ghosts
 that haunt
 that haunt as all ghosts are haunted

line my shrouds up in neat rows -- reduce me to acronyms

almost empty
 but a bed
 but a chair
 one chair
brought in to comfort
the cherished

the ghosts here
they manifest
 as scuff-marks
 as scratches
 as the dent in the drywall
 the shape of a head
 encased in an aura of grief

& she in the bed
is a ghost
is a ghost's shell

dilute starlight
& dilate my eyes
eyeslduge sifts through
silt & soil & graveyard dust
taste myself; my snakeskin
skin my brain
dig it up like a site
of atoms empty my mouth
& press Night through my teeth

I eat cicada shells off boiled bark & become quietempty

the left-hand marked
the roseway border --

ordered rows
of the end

serpents coiled
wound like thread

what were they?
vaguely infinitesimal --
 underblessed

cellular structures strung together
cells beside cells contained
atomic eternity
infinite finish
bottled calm

salted soil sent
to press against my tongue
taste talcum taste tears
taste sins in the sediment
taste ashes in the crumb
 something is --

-- built there

-- ended here

how close to eternity is sleep?

sleep counted in dreams
 moments counted in dreams
 counted in nightmares

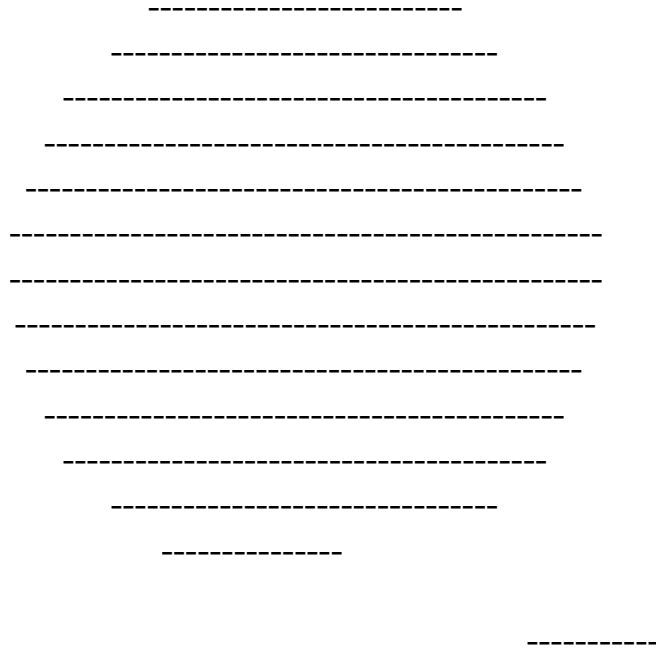
counted in breaths
 breaths counted in eighths
 like steps of dance

as the void flickers beneath my [resting] lids.

& language is a ghost

words stitched
in a ring of catastrophe

haunt as all ghosts are haunted



saturate me in rose scented silk
scatter my particles into a mouth
 your mouth my mouth mouth
 of sea or snake or silo
saturate me in spider silk
saturate me in sodium chloride
ionize me conduct me
press me into your grey matter
& that rosy spider silk

I miss a person the others want to forget

broken dishes scattered
like dust
like sand
soil
salt

broken dishes
forbidden ceramics
broken and scattered
like memories

broken as all ghosts
are broken

I died one afternoon
then reincarnated
repossessed the same body
but I killed myself
 myself that noticed
the tops of bathroom doors
cut off
 myself that glowered
at the slow drip of the tap
 myself who paced
at Night
wearing trenches into linoleum

for a restless self

I shroud myself
in acronyms
in linen
in that old quilt from the white closet

my salt is
a plastic box
chemical trinkets
talismans
to keep the dead self out

ghosts on unit --
 of a culinary affection
 of sleeplessness
ghosts of completeness
 of poverty
 of privilege
& ghosts
 of two dead husbands

sow me from the pieces

I remember this old quilt
suspended in a hoop
stitches strung in by soft hands
slender fingers
pressing silver needles through

fractures pierced and pieced
together

in the layers are ghosts
blood from unsteady hands
saliva between cotton cloth
left on the tails of thread

kisses left behind by a dead woman

in another old closet --

sheer me of my starlight
spin webs from my silk
sew
sow
silence

slip needles through my fasciae
piece me from --

-- my fractures

-- our fragments

the truth is,
I miss that bed. adjustable, memory foam, neatly made for me --
most days. like at a Motel 6.

the first Nights on it
I shook. I cried. I missed.

but that old quilt from the white closet --
brought to me by tender hands --
stilled shattering stars.

I wrapped myself in cotton comfort and capsules filled with milligrams.

my Nightmares stopped.

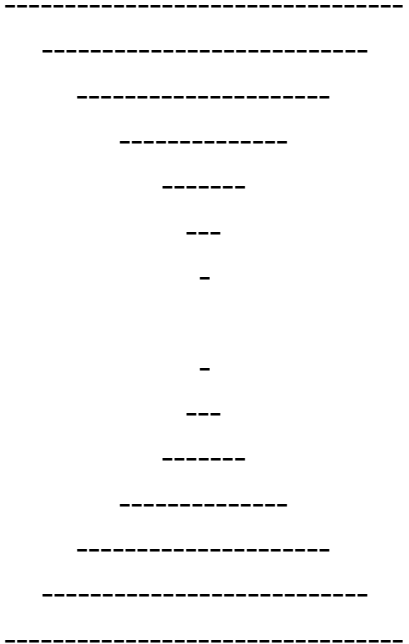
& my dreams stopped.

the truth is,
I miss the dreams

rooms with no locks
invasions of intimate space
an unowned bed
an unmoving space

& the shower's cone shaped knob
is hard to turn

I want the broken dishes from the cracked kitchen shelf



Night can't be seen through crosshatched metal
only darkness pushes in
presses through diamond shaped holes

sitting in the unowned bed
I see an old Night

tilled soil
rows of shorn corn stalks
ice sparkles --
 crystalline structures left in the ridges
 of sawtooth grass

 & a sawtooth star reciprocates against my brain
 shaving the ice from it

in a hospital bed

in July

a chigger burrowed
a tick latched
a yellow jacket stung
& stung
& left venom
under stars

& the girl in the bed
is a spider
piecing the holes in her web

shear me of my fibers -- weave Night from my threads

& language is a ghost
strings of vowels press against my stapes
leave their fractures & thread tails

broken
broken as all ghosts are broken

how close to eternity is sleep?

do the spiders crawl in my mouth?
do they fill my cavity with silk?

the girl pressed against the slate floor
she is a ghost now

broken as all g/hosts are broken

I don't listen for the fireworks anymore
their lights are mockeries --

-- of that Night

-- of the stars

sip my sighs
let their viscosity seep
into skin
& shatter
like exploded fiberglass

they will itch
they will intrude

I empty my mouth of empathy
tongue & teeth wrap around
& embrace the eulogy

stir silver
thread through eyes
thread through jaw
wired as a corpse
is wired

broken closed
broken as all ghosts are broken

seal still stick stir stand stare story story story seep sip send sealed steal star

-- stolen

it's like removing a splinter
a thorn
a silver skewer
a spear

reliving Nights
not worth whispers

the two heads of my snake self --
one caught in the thorns
in the raspberry bramble
twisted against knots into molecular fusion
severs itself -- unwinds its cellular threads

the ghost of the dead head
tasted in the raspberries
& the other head's soured mouth

you're all here because you experienced a crisis
a psychiatric emergency
a wailing
a kiss of --
a starless galaxy

slither up from the core of the earth
magma hardens like a shell
& weights the snake against the crust

it's like climbing the hot ladder out of hell
skin seared
into metal rungs

reliving Nights not worth whispers reliving Nights not worth whispers

relive that Night
pull that thorn

--

out

retell myself every week
for weeks

retell myself
at exit
at intake
at 10:30 appointments

Wednesday
Thursday
PHQ-9
after dinner
after bedtime
during dreams

& yes
I do cry

shear swallow swell shame shake snake serpent surreal suppress surrender --

- admit
- accept

suffering = pain + non acceptance

-- suffer

how close to the stars is fate?
destined dust
destined destruct
destined destinations

out of
into
with

Sertraline	150
Prazosin	1 then 2 then 3
Hydroxizine	--
Miratazapine	1 half then 1 whole
Melatonin	3

she is slownow

how close to sleep is eternity --

salt
talisman
ice
spider
star

circle
trinkets
chips
silk
spells

relive a Night not worth whispers
a Night buried under grey matter
under stars
twined in bramble

a Night of smoky air
the smell of powder
stars blocked out
by fast fading fire

Night of salt
of blue
of pale
of slate
of latex
of piercing
of porcelain
of piercing
of porcelain
of icy July

Night --
shatters
steals
stains
suppress
suppress

storystorystory

fuck his--story

1 2 3 4 -----

----- + + 7 8

1

2

2

4

5

6

7

8

+

+

+

+

I am a snake
& a spider
made of stardust
shed from self
surrendered

shameless bloodfull allowed

pieced from colored fragments
sutured by tender hands
& ghost hands

Not is North is Nothing is Night

“The subject has had trouble shaking the pain . . . Her preoccupation with pain permits the pain to become parasitic. It eats through layers of her self variably, mostly consuming the surface, but sometimes penetrating deeper

[. . .]

The subject begins to complain that she feels invisible ‘creatures’ piggybacking on her [. . .]

[. . .] *as astringent, as frictive, as burrowing, as diminishing. The subject develops the desire to live in a world without use [. . .]*

Where she is not, she wants nothing else.”

Elizabeth Robinson, *On Ghosts*

*"gaze
for which
I cease to
live — “*

Emily Dickinson, *Envelope Poems*

I suffer as all sufferers suffer. What I suffer is diagnosed in acronyms — MDD & PTSD — and suicidality; that is to say, suicidal thoughts/self harming actions. Mental illness is less taboo than it was before, but still exists buried beneath fake smiles, overpacked schedules, Netflix binges, food binges, alcohol binges . . . It is nobly addressed in TV shows and movies and regarded as a problem among the homeless and youth. Society commends the bravery of the mentally ill people who come out and say, “yes, I suffer from [acronym],” as if they are admitting to perverseness, boldly facing their inadequacies head on. “Good for you,” they say. “It’s brave of you to get help.” “I’m proud of you.” While most of us suffer in silence. And what is said of those who are not so *brave*? Those who succumb to the voices and urges, who lose hard battles with their illnesses? What is said of the person who doesn’t seek help or, more likely, who can’t? “Suicide is the most selfish thing a person could do,” says the person not confronted with a relentless onslaught of thoughts that scream,

*you’d be better off dead,
and so would everyone else.*

A mind imprisoned by pain, a body imprisoned by a mind.

I suffered, undiagnosed and untreated, for eleven years. Too afraid to reveal my weakness to family or to ask for help for what I grew to believe was just a feeling — attention-seeking-desperation. I kept my deep scratches hidden under my swimsuit lines, crashed on adrenaline rushes, partied then worked then partied, hardly sleeping in between. Kept busy. Distracted. I dug holes in my flesh to the core of my bones and poured unwanted, un-understood urges and feelings inside, covered them with scars and shattered ice. When I failed at curtailing my symptoms myself, I relied on only my most trusted friends, long term romantic partners, and crisis hotlines to keep me floating on the the side of alive, never divulging the true extent of my sickness. But these resources had limits, easily pushed by my bouts of uncontrollable dysphoria — my moments of what I can only describe as *crazy*.

Is it that, even now, nearly a year after I went to 7 North, I am still afraid? And what am I afraid of? Afraid to admit I am broken? More comfortable in my hopelessness than in my helplessness?

Afraid of being diagnosed, no, labeled: “insane”. Because that is how I would be seen, isn’t it? Descriptions of diagnoses are meaningless to the lay person who would see me and see hospitalized and see “insanity.” The way they would step back as if my mind were contagious.

The/My episode that led me to commit myself happened the night of July 16th; -- lasted into the early morning. It started as I sat at my computer. I felt the pressure well up in my chest and eyes -- the inexplicable overwhelming. I felt itchy. I felt scared. And angry. I did as I had always done over the years: I locked myself in my bathroom, threw ice cubes -- hard -- into my shower, watched them shatter like glass, held their coldness in my hands. I texted the Crisis Hotline.

*The response: **We are currently experiencing a large volume of requests. A hotline operator will be with you shortly.***

And shortly never came.

So the pressure pressed harder and I --

don’t remember what happened next except that I was scratching my scalp incessantly, pulling skin into my fingernails while my husband tried to hold my

arms back. And I remember that every muscle in my body ached from clenching. And I remember screaming, but not exactly what I said.

*And I heard my husband repeat, “do you want to talk to someone? Do you need a doctor? Do you need a doctor **now**?”*

And I argued with him that all offices would be closed. He told me we could go to the emergency room. I said, “no, not for this,” thinking this was not an emergency.

And I thought, am I so weak that I can't fight this?

It was some banal sentence addressed at me. Something, that in its context was meaningless, but still shot a memory to my fore-mind.

It was the ghost of language that sent me there.

I was admitted to 7 North, UW Medical Center's inpatient psychiatry unit. This is where my project, *North of Nothing* began.

University of Washington
Medical Center

Welcome to 7 North

INPATIENT PSYCHIATRY
PROGRAM ORIENTATION

On Unit [With Quilt]

My first night at 7 North was particularly hard. To begin, I only had what I'd brought to the ER: my backpack full of books and the clothes I was wearing. I was lonely and exhausted, poked full of holes where blood was taken from me. I already missed my home and my family. The room assigned to me was uncomfortably sterile, as hospital rooms are. It was past midnight by the time the intake nurses finished explaining the rules and searching my belongings. As I slipped into an unfamiliar bed and shivered under the thin blanket, I felt as if I were endlessly falling.

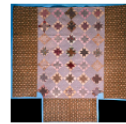
When morning came I called my husband with a list of things I wanted him to bring me. A change of clothes, my face wash, and my late grandmother's quilt. My second night was a little easier — the quilt's gentle power comforting me.

The poetry became a quilt because of this comfort. Quilts are items of rich history and tradition, a craft done historically by women and convalescents, both of which I am. These practical objects have been made from scrapped fabric to keep loved ones warm through generations. Libraries of traditional quilt blocks are full, each block carrying its own meaning and names, though some are lost. They are thrifty pieces of uncredited artistry, sewn out of need, women's stories stitched into fragments of cloth with needles, thread and blood. To quilt is to make tenderness tactile.



1850 - 1875 "Variable Star" Pieced Quilt

DATE MADE 1850-1875
MAKER unknown
ID NUMBER 1996.0044.112



1840 - 1860 "Evening Star" Pieced Quilt

DATE MADE 1840-1860
MAKER unknown
ID NUMBER TE.T17345.000



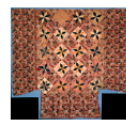
1840 - 1860 "LeMoyne Star" Pieced Quilt

DATE MADE 1840-1860
MAKER unknown
ID NUMBER TE.T17350.000



1830 - 1880 "Eight-pointed Star" Pieced Quilt

DATE MADE 1830-1880
MAKER unknown
ID NUMBER TE.T17324.000



1840 - 1860 "LeMoyne Star" Pieced Quilt

DATE MADE 1840-1860
MAKER unknown
ID NUMBER TE.T17342.000



1840 - 1860 "Variable Star" Pieced Quilt

DATE MADE 1840-1860
MAKER unknown
ID NUMBER TE.T17341.000



1850 - 1875 Long Plantation "Feathered Star" Pieced Quilt

DATE MADE 1850-1875
MAKER unknown
ID NUMBER 1979.0933.01

“— in this I see the trace of my grandmother.”

Elizabeth Robinson, *On Ghosts*

The white closet was my grandmother’s closet. In the corner of her bedroom. I



don’t actually recall ever seeing the inside of it when she was living, though that doesn’t mean I hadn’t.

What I do remember of it was from walking her house after her memorial service. The house was left exactly the same, a capsule of her life. Traces of her left in the sofa, the portrait of a girl reading, the creaky dining room floor, the breakfast nook, the stacks of unopened mail, the steep attic way stairs, the sunroom where I’d spent much of my childhood, the old fashioned kitchen sink, the lack of a dishwasher, the glass kitchen cabinets and strings of chili peppers by the window, the collections of pewter trays and little boxes, and in the dark corner of her room, in the white closet, her quilts. Quilts she made, quilts her mother made, and other quilts, made by women, most of whom I’d never known. She kept one

on her bed and it was offered to me. But there was only one I wanted: a double wedding ring pattern, machine pieced, but hand quilted, no batting; just two layers of cotton fabric stitched together, a hand sewn scalloped edge . . .

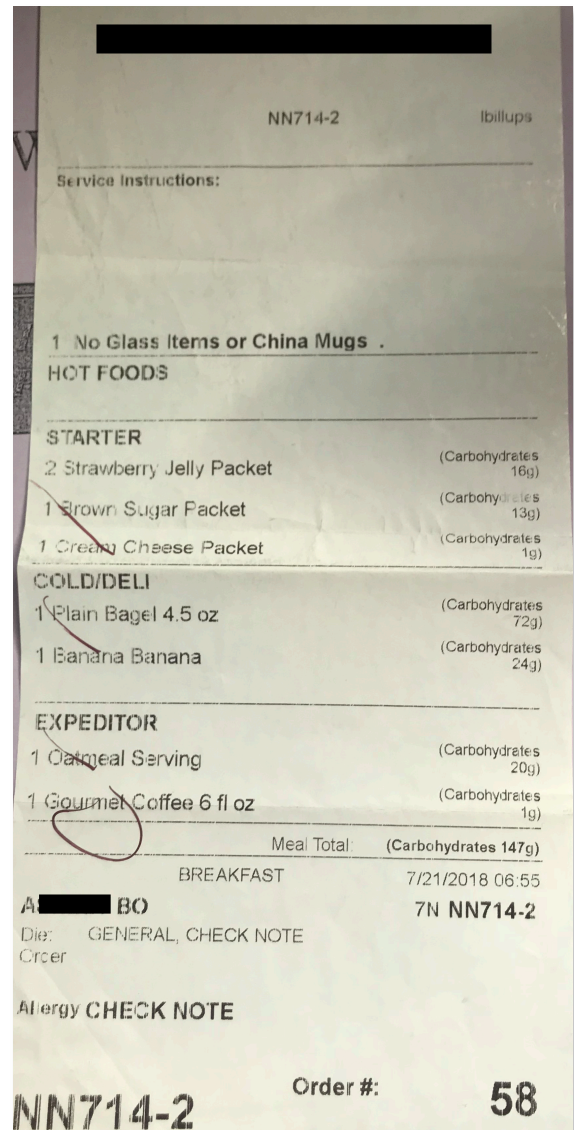
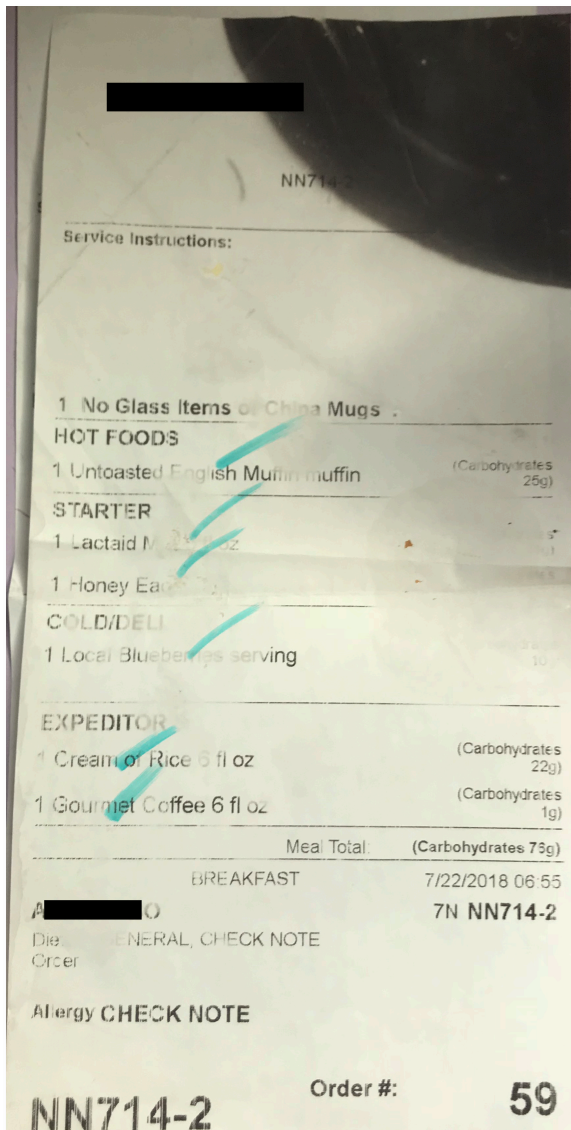
During desperate times and long travel, quilts served a second, improvised purpose, as shrouds to wrap the dead. This dual usage, as an item of warmth and love and an item of departure and grief inspired the nature of *North of Nothing’s* quilt. It is backed with double gauze, a fabric often associated with injury

and illness. It's made entirely of cotton and silk, materials chosen for their biodegradability. It is designed to comfort the living and bury the dead, existing on that threshold as I often have in my suicidality.

The star in the corner of my quilt is based on the *silent star* block, but I've shattered it, triangles scattering from broken points into the darkness of the quilt. Opposite the star, in the bottom corner is my version of a *log cabin* block design, but instead of being made from straight strips, it's made from triangles; instead of a red square in the center, there is a white one with only drops of red at the very center. This pattern is the *log cabin* turned hospital room. White and sterile with only blood coloring the fabric where my arms dripped. The blood red drops at the center of the *hospital* block and the triangles at the center of the *silent start* are another traditional quilt block: *broken dishes* also known as *hourglass*. These broken dishes are ghosts of the notes left on my meal tickets at 7 North. Notes which read —

No Glass Items or China Mugs

I don't have to mention the reason.



A small sample of quilt blocks —

Log Cabin - home and hearth, a red square at the center; a fire

*Broken Dishes - shattered treasures on a pioneer trail; a makeshift grave marker
on a Southern plantation; hourglass*

Silent Star - a Victory quilt pattern; I can't find any more information online

Sawtooth Star - also the Evening Star; a guide, perhaps

*Double Wedding Ring - the switch from dark to pastel; the quilt kits ordered from
catalogues by mid-century wives*

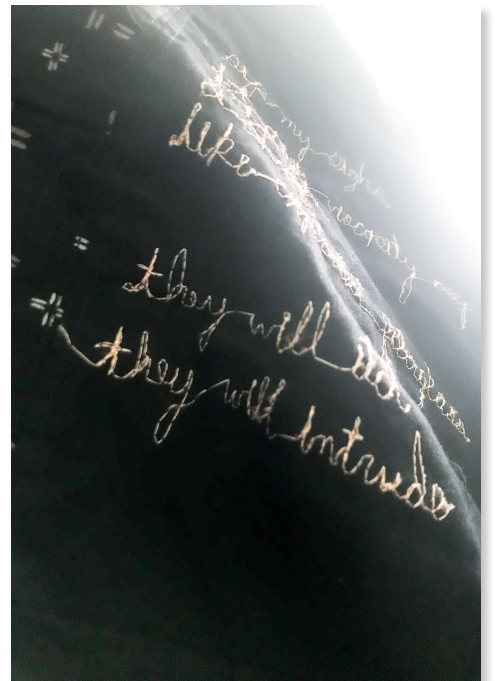
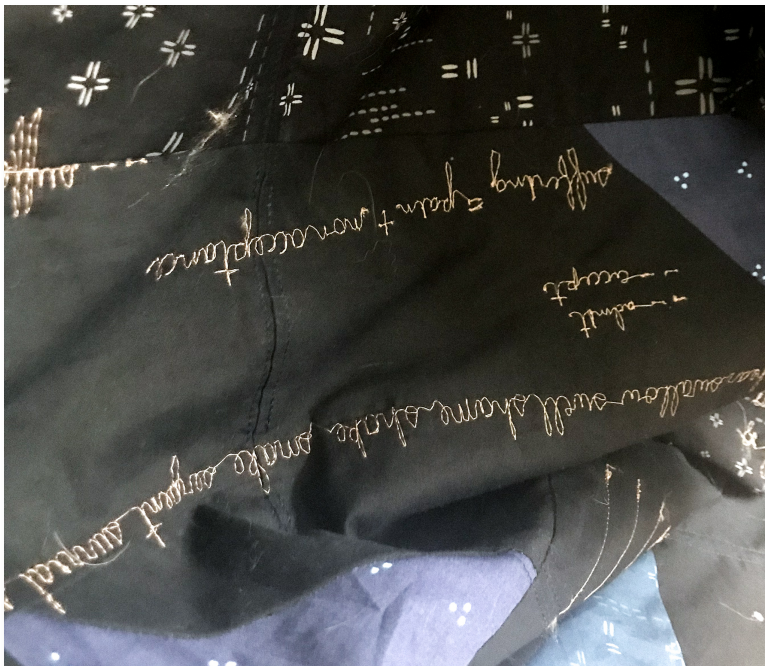
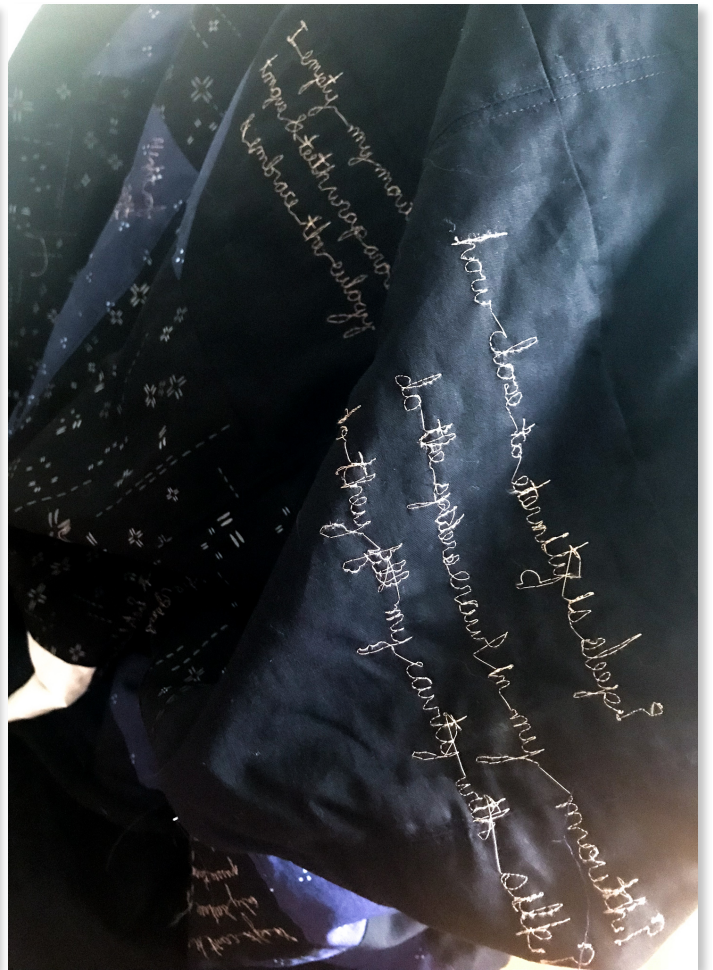
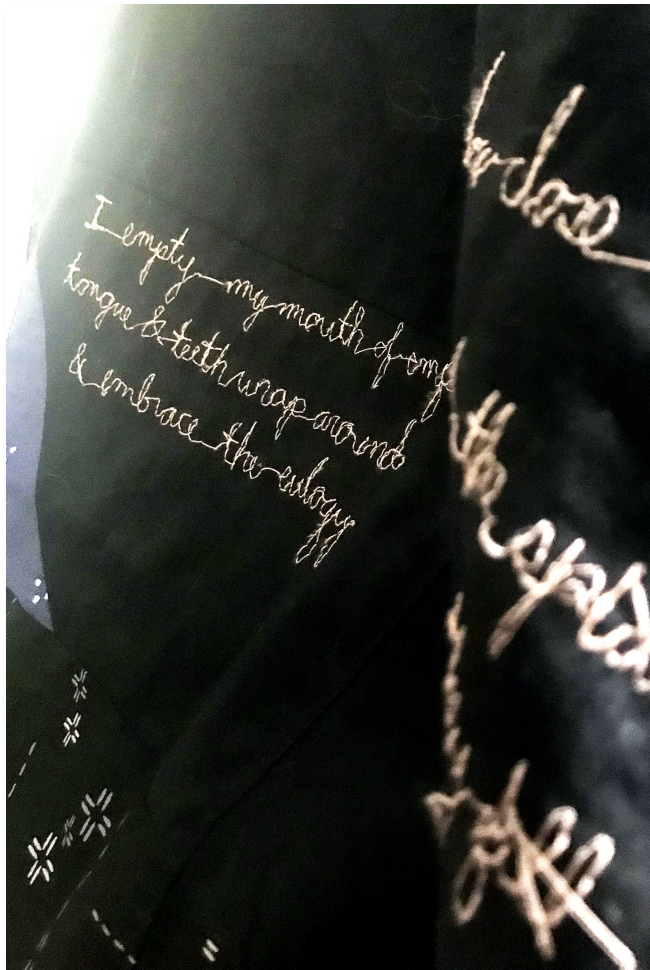


Light presses in --











“Contrary to popular belief, clinical depression is not a ‘normal part of being a woman’ nor is it a ‘female weakness.’

Women experience depression at roughly twice the rate of men.

Girls 14-18 years of age have consistently higher rates of depression than boys in this age group.

Although men are more likely than women to die by suicide, women report attempting suicide approximately twice as often as men.

Fewer than half of the women who experience clinical depression will ever seek care.”

Mental Health America

Hysteria, Melancholy, Malady

Hysteria was a term used for millennia, the symptoms and causes of which were first described in Ancient Egypt. The effects of hysteria were attributed to the “wandering womb,” an idea that an unconsummated, unmarried, and/or childless womb would become loose within the body and migrate up or down. In Ancient Egypt, the remedy was an acrid scent placed at the orifice end where the uterus was suspected to have wandered and perfumed scents at the opposite orifice end (the mouth/nose vs. the vagina). In Ancient Greece, the prescription was sex, specifically with a penis. Rome’s Claudius Galen administered a range of herbal remedies such as mint, hellebore, belladonna, and valerian as well as prescribed marriage and abstinence/repression for young women afflicted with the malady. The Middle Ages and Christian Europe brought God into treatment, attributing hysteria to women’s original sin or demonic possession. Female physician Trotula (though the title of physician was not actually given to her) recognized that women did not tell doctors of their maladies out of shame of their bodies. She attempted to treat women more gently, also prescribing herbs to women exhibiting madness. Hildegard of Bingen, female health-carer and mystic, described melancholy as an expression of a defective soul, incurable. She held the opinion that both Adam and Eve were responsible for man’s fall from grace and thus could both be corrupted by evil. She describes men affected by madness as “ugly and perverse,” while women with the disease are “slender and minute . . . infertile because of a weak and fragile uterus.”² In the later Middle Ages, St. Thomas Aquinas’s assertion that women were “failed men” and thus inferior — a consequence of sin — attributed women’s madness to collusion with the devil, women known now as witches. Women executed as witches were often unmarried, elderly, and mentally ill. If a physician could not understand the sickness, it was ascribed to evil. But hysteria didn’t die with the last witch.

The treatment of madness up until the birth of psychiatry (in the 19th century) was asylum. Horrible, degrading places, stripped of humanity, often reserved for the poor and middle class who could

not afford home care. Women could be forced into asylums if their husbands, sons, or other male family claimed they were mad.

After the founding of the science of psychiatry, many of these asylums underwent reform, often led by female activists. However, as time continued on, women came to highly outnumber men in asylums. The image of a violent madman of the centuries previous were replaced by a placated madwoman. Known often as “Ophelias” women in asylums were managed by male doctors and staff who ran their institutions as men ran their homes. Women were expected to become dutiful and to return to their household responsibilities. “Ophelias” were named after the tragic madwoman of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, and dressed to look like them, too. In shifty dresses [gauzy structures], untied hair, and flower crowns.

Silas Weir Mitchell was a specialist in neurasthenia (nervous breakdowns; fragile nerves; nervous exhaustion), a common ailment of Victorian wives. Mitchell developed the *Rest Cure* treatment for women with this women’s affliction. Women with neurasthenia were often described as thin, anemic, and fatigued. Mitchell’s *Rest Cure* was bedrest with an additional prescription of only fatty foods and a daily massage. While this may sound gentle, his motives were to intentionally make women so restless that they would hop out of bed and return to their housework and wifely duties. According to Mitchell, this “cured” their “weak nerves.” The thought that women felt unchallenged and unfulfilled in their subordinate lifestyles was not an idea brought up in the treatment of housewives, so this invented illness and so-called cure were dreamt up to explain away depressive symptoms and to, instead, blame these symptoms on the inherent weakness of women. Mitchell was also quoted to say, “the man who does not know sick women does not know women.”

Depression remained a common affliction for housewives into the mid 20th century (and continues to be for housewives lacking agency today). By this time, medication had been discovered and many housewives were prescribed them. However, a more dubious treatment was given to women who did not appear to respond to the more conservative methods: transorbital lobotomy. An image still used to induce horror to the populace, transorbital lobotomy — also known as icepick lobotomy — was developed by Dr. Walter Freeman to make the procedure of lobotomy (removing the frontal lobe of the brain) easier to perform. More specifically, to perform in any office without the need to drill holes into the skull and thus eliminating the operating room. The icepick lobotomy came into existence when Freeman got the idea to insert the lobotomy tool through the eyes. His first tool used for this was one of his own icepicks from home, which he used to practice on grapefruit and cadavers. The devolvement of the icepick lobotomy did make the procedure easier to perform, but now this aggressive treatment was a “simple office procedure” and more frequently prescribed as a result. Freeman himself performed approximately 4,000 transorbital lobotomies himself despite having no surgical training. Up to 40% of those Freeman lobotomized were homosexual people. In 1949 5,074 lobotomies were done in the United States. In 1951,

that number was 18,608. 60% of lobotomized people, both by transorbital and more traditional methods, were women.

Why dive into this history of cruelty and oppression? When my treatments at 7 North and at followup offices were kind and gentle, administered by caring professionals? Is it the fear again? Am I afraid that, despite my healthy experience, they may still come for me? The men in white uniforms, with a straight jacket meant for me in their tow . . .

They are not coming. I know.

But the history here -- the history imbedded in my female organs; the history of patients who were mostly female, feminine, or queer -- it presses against my brain. How lucky I was to have nothing to fear in the end, but does it mean my fear was unjustified? Unfounded?

My weak nerves.

Being called "oversensitive" as I often was as a child, and more as an adolescent. The thought of weakness haunted me. The language of brokenness haunted me. Still haunts me, though I've learned to keep the windows closed.

This is my snakeskin. The women I called on. The spirits I summoned to bring me up through the ice:

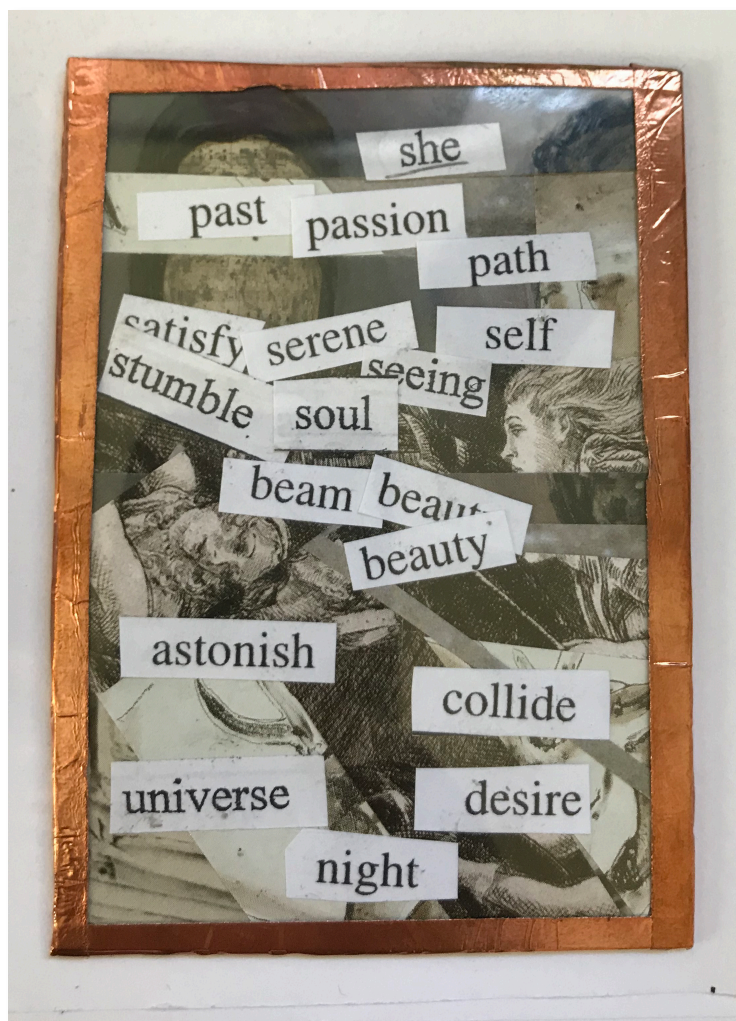
Eve, the sinner;

Lilith, the serpent.

And with them:

*the Ophelias, the Hysterics, the Grecian Virgins,
the Madwomen, the Broken Wives, the Witches,
my grandmother, my mother's mother, my mother,
myself*

In the hospital I read Susan Howe's *Spontaneous Particulars* and on page 25, midway through my hospitalization, I encountered this line: "Coming home to poetry — you permit yourself liberties — in the first place — happiness." Poetry was my other comfort.



This magnet was made at 7 North, during art therapy. The project was to create a token of our stay with something inspirational on it. I sat at a table strewn with cut up Bible verses, quotes from famous dead people, and lists of typed out words. These lists drew me in. I cut out the words that felt like my fibers and faces of women. These pieces stitched together into this magnet — my first call to Eve and Lilith and madwomen past; the seeds of my poetry.

"SHE is Desire's dream. In myth at any time, a woman may suddenly change form. Ariadne became a spider, Alcyone, a bird, Niobe, a stone."

Susan Howe, My Emily Dickinson

The Center of the Star is Trauma: PTSD Exposure Therapy

At outset of exercise pt reports anxiety at a 4

List of events:

- He insisted on pictures of. HE got really angry if she said no. [redacted]
- [redacted] over 4th of July. She lost [redacted] day.
- [redacted] that he forcibly [redacted] happened a couple of times in the [redacted]. Then he left. [redacted] *one night always completed.*
- [redacted] couple of months later, I stayed in his penthouse [redacted]
- [redacted] pictures of me while I was there. I don't remember very much about that trip.
- I went home. [redacted] continued [redacted] [redacted] I was 16.
- [redacted]
- [redacted] I hadn't told my parents that we broke up with him. I made it very clear that I didn't [redacted] never worked. [redacted] pressing. He never threatened me [redacted] this way of asking, [redacted] he would use words, [redacted]
- [redacted] I don't really know what happened after [redacted]

- Anxiety is at a 6 now.

Narrative: Anxiety at a 6.

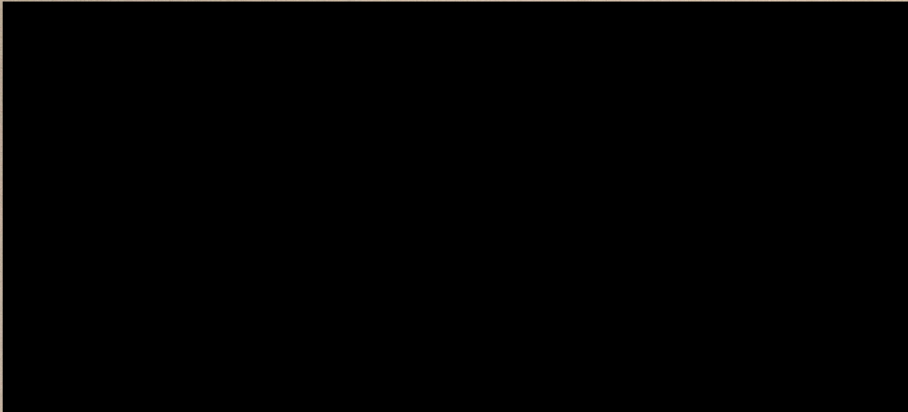
[redacted]

[redacted] I felt really guilty about that. [redacted] He [redacted] upset. [redacted] 4th of July [redacted] fireworks. [redacted] Then there was [redacted] window [redacted] alone. Anxiety at a 7 on read through [redacted] alone [redacted] pressing, [redacted] I was barefoot. My hair smelled like berries from the artificial shampoo. I remember [redacted] front door of my house arguing [redacted] It was smoky outside [redacted] through the windows, [redacted] the sound of fireworks [redacted] to go into the basement [redacted] - anxiety at an 8 on read through. I don't know why I said that. [redacted] a really small [redacted] room. [redacted] quieter [redacted]. The fireworks were muffled. And it was really bright; the light was right above me [redacted] the door. [redacted] to the door. - anxiety at a 8. [redacted] the door. [redacted] it didn't matter [redacted] no, [redacted]

[redacted] my eyes closed. - anxiety at an 8. [redacted]
saying, "I don't want to hurt you. Sorry, [redacted]" He would repeat those things. [redacted]
[redacted] Anxiety at a 9. Second session 9, 9 again. He [redacted] also say [redacted] name. [redacted] me
nauseous. He only said my first and middle name [redacted] he was trying to be sweet, [redacted]
or asking me to do something [redacted]. [redacted]
[redacted]. [redacted] I came up out of the basement. [redacted]
[redacted] had her [redacted] hands together [redacted] that night. [redacted]
[redacted] violated by [redacted] myself. [redacted] complied [redacted]
[redacted] responsible [redacted] basement. - anxiety at a 6 or 7. Second session 7.

[redacted]
[redacted]

I felt really stupid for going into the basement. Anxiety at a 7.



Second Session:

[redacted] – anxiety at an 8 on
read through (second session anxiety at a 6) [redacted]
[redacted]
underneath the door. I was really close to the door. [redacted]
[redacted] I've always had a hard time confronting people
[redacted] turn
whatever I was saying as my fault. [redacted]
[redacted] anxiety at a 8. [redacted]
arguing with him, it didn't matter how many times he said, he would just keep asking. I just wanted it
to be over, the [redacted] [redacted] least I was out of there
[redacted] Anxiety at a 7 [redacted] laying on [redacted] a cold slate floor. [redacted]
[redacted] 8 [redacted] behind
me it was dark, [redacted] in front of me it was really bright. I don't remember how [redacted] but I
remember that he was wearing most of his clothes. I [redacted] [redacted]
[redacted] exposed. [redacted] see [redacted] could see [redacted] [redacted]
[redacted] 8. [redacted] I could smell [redacted] latex [redacted]
[redacted] pain. [redacted] [redacted] Blue eyes. [redacted]
[redacted] breathing. [redacted] air [redacted] out of
[redacted] Like being torn open. [redacted] [redacted]
[redacted] I held my breath [redacted] [redacted] I r
[redacted] [redacted] anything [redacted] I r
[redacted]

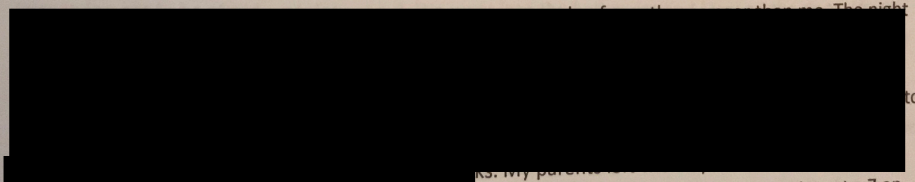
At outset of exercise pt reports anxiety at a 4



- Anxiety is at a 6 now.

Narrative: Anxiety at a 6.

Second session: anxiety at a 3 3rd session at a 2



... window of ... alone. 3rd session - anxiety at a 2. Anxiety at a 7 on

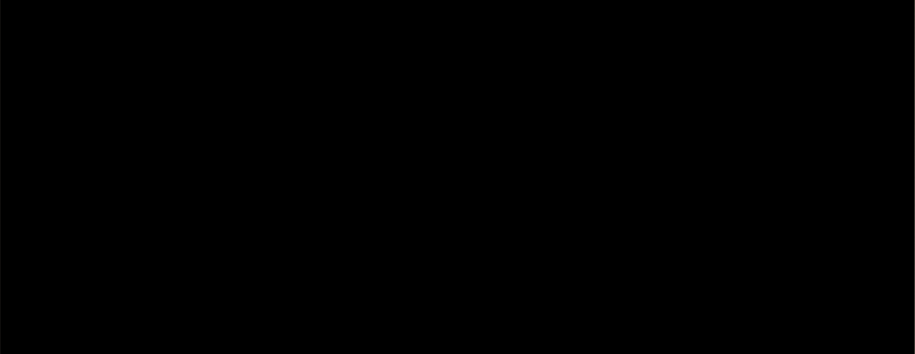
... I was barefoot. My ... the front door of my ... - It was smoky outside

... the windows, with the sound of fireworks going off - ... to go ...

... basement ... Anxiety at a 3 on 3rd read through- anxiety at an 8 on read

through (second session anxiety at a 6) ... quiet ... fireworks ... muffled. ...

... bright; ... light ... above ... feel ...



I felt really stupid for going into the basement. Anxiety at a 7.

-

Third Session -

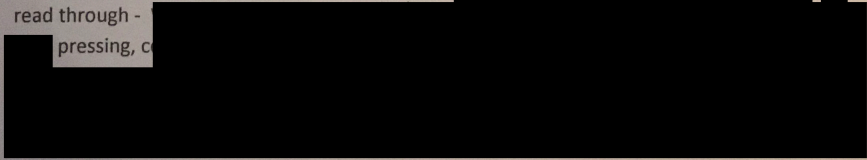
- Narrative: Anxiety at a 6.
- Second session: anxiety at a 3 3rd session at a 2; snd read through - 2



ts left with my sister
3rd session – anxiety at a 2. Anxiety at a 7 on

read through -

pressing, c



*“Does a woman’s mind move in time with a man’s? What is the end of
Logic?”*

*Between 1858 and 1860 Emily Dickinson became the poet we know. For this
northern will to become I—free to excavate and interrogate definition, the
first labor called for was to sweep away the pernicious idea of poetry as
embroidery for women.*

...

*How do I, choosing messages from the code of others in order to participate
in the universal theme of Language, pull SHE from all the myriad symbols
and sightings of HE.”*

Susan Howe, *My Emily Dickinson*

Dash

Which body is a quilt meant to cover? A cold body? A sick body? A dead body? A woman’s body? Or the body of a woman’s man? And is it a woman’s man she covers or is it the man’s woman who covers him to fulfill her nurturing duty?

Whose language am I using now? Where is *I* in this? Was *I* ever meant to refer to woman, woman who had no sense of *I* when the language was made? When the language was used? When women could not own property, including their art? How many women sacrificed their *I* for a man’s name to sign at the bottom of a painting or on the title page of a book? Who were the Brontë sisters before they were the Brontë sisters? Who was George Elliot? George Sand? Was A Lady too bold to claim body before her name?

Reading Emily Dickinson’s poetry from sources that preserve her hand, I am drawn to her use of the em dash. Each fragment of writing feels as if it is transient or incomplete — interrupted. Her words read as if curtailed by her own hand. The difference of a dash and a period, like a line between logic/chronology and mysticism. Does a finishing period signify a masculine end? The end of a thought. The efficient use of its space. It’s lack of breath.

HESITATE from the Latin, meaning to stick. Stammer. To hold back in doubt, have difficulty speaking. “*He* may pause but *he* must not hesitate” —Ruskin. Hesitation circled back and surrounded everyone in that confident age of aggressive industrial expansion and brutal Empire building. Hesitation and Separation. The Civil War had split America in two. *He* might pause, *She* hesitated. *My Emily Dickinson*, Susan Howe, pg. 21

I took Emily Dickinson's em dash to signify my incompleteness — my own fragmented thoughts. But I broke it in two, into the double hyphen, like pieces of quilt, broken dishes, memories, shattered ice, the shape of stitches to hold it all together. The language in the poetry is sprouted from the language of the art therapy magnet. *North of Nothing* is a composite of words selected because they felt like my fibers, the warps and wefts and fabric scraps that make up body. To write through the body, with my emotions, untuned to and uncaring of the logic of chronology or the hierarchy of sense channels my organ history into poetry, fabricating new cells in the holes where *his* language once bored.

The ghost of language sent me there —

Burrs left under my skin

The language of HE --

The touch of language brought me out --

The language of SHE --

This is a book, a quilt, a healing, and a history.

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